

Loving Earth Back to Health

A worship outline by Kathy Toivanen

Preparation

If you have a screen that projects visuals, hymns and readings for worship, you may wish to find visuals of Earth; both those that lift up the vibrancy and beauty as well as those that show Earth's scars and damage. You will need a sprig of rosemary for each worshipper. Garden centres often sell potted herbs. The call to worship is very powerful if you use a drum as the 'heart beat'. A djembe or the Celtic bodhrán have a nice timbre. The children's conversation requires a ball of wool or thick string/twine, plastic bags and bottles and visuals if you choose to use them. You may also decorate the worship space with plants, rocks, flowers indigenous to your area.

Opening Hymn: *(Choose any one of the following)*

"Each Blade of Grass"	More Voices 37
"O Beautiful Gaia"	More Voices 41
"All Creatures of Our God and King"	Voices United 217

Call to Worship & Opening Prayer

The call worship is adapted from "Rhythms of the Heart" by Susan Lukey & David Robertson, p. 49 in 'Gathering, Summer Autumn 2005', used by permission.) If you have someone who can drum, ask them to drum softly during the call to worship.

One: One heart.

All: One beat.

One: One God who dreamed the universe into being.

All: One heart, one beat.

One: One voice speaking, "Let there be..."

**All: And there was light and there was darkness,
evening and morning, waters above and waters below**

One: And there was sun and moon, plants and trees
birds and sea creatures, animals and human beings

**All: One heart, one beat,
joined by many hearts beating to the rhythm of one heart,
the rhythm of the one God.**

One: Many hearts discovering diversity, creativity, unique rhythms, unique beats. Many rhythms, many beats - at times competing, at times circling at times searching for the one heart, the one beat, the one God.

All: What calls us to worship?

One: What calls us to gather?

All: It is the one heart, the one beat.

One: We come together and many rhythms, many beats
harmonize in their own unique ways with the one beat,

All: the one heart, the one God.

One: Come let us worship in the rhythms of the heart.
Come let us worship in the rhythm of God.
Come let us unite our hearts with God's heart as we pray & sing:
***('Spirit, Open My Heart' More Voices 79 chorus, verse 3 & repeat
chorus or 'Joyful, Joyful We Adore You' Voices United 232, verse 1)***

Children's Time/Conversation

(this is also a conversation that can be shared with the entire congregation)

Using a ball of wool or fairly thick string, you are going to create a web. Hold on to the end of the wool or string and toss the ball to the first child. Ask them to hold onto the wool/string so that the line is taut between you and then toss the ball to another child. Continue tossing the ball until you have a network of lines of wool/string that resemble a spider's web. One of the ways that we speak about the people, the animals, the plants, the landscape, water and air on Earth is to say that we are connected together just like this web of string/wool connects us now. If I pull on my end of the string (*pull your string*), what happens? (*it is felt by another person holding the string*). (*invite others in the web to pull their string so that they too can experience the effect*) In the same way, if we pollute the air in Canada from all the cars that we drive, that same air flows to other places in the world and affects those places too. If we pour chemicals or poisonous stuff into our rivers in one part of Ontario, that water will flow to other lakes and rivers and carry the chemicals/poisons to them. The plants, fish and other water life get sick; the animals and people that eat the fish or drink the water get sick and the cycle continues.

(you may wish to give a few concrete examples – you can use photos if you have a screen in worship or bring in items like plastic bottles and bags)

Many plastic bottles and containers that have been thrown away have floated into the waters that lead to the ocean and now there is a huge floating garbage dump of plastic in the Pacific Ocean.

<http://www.greatgarbagepatch.org/>

Our use of fossil fuels (oil, coal) in the cities of North America and Europe is warming up the earth so that the ice is melting far away in the Arctic and Antarctic and this is making the water levels rise in the oceans so that some of the islands that are home to people and animals are getting smaller and smaller and some day may disappear totally under the water. One of those islands is the nation of Tuvalu in the South Pacific.

While the sad news is that our lack of care for these has caused disease and damage to travel all around the world, God also gives us these connections as a gift so that we can work together to begin to heal the disease and damage we have created in the world. We can do that by our actions here and now. Invite the children and others to give some examples of actions that they can take for the healing and health of the earth.

e.g. use non-toxic cleaners and 'green' personal products

-stop using plastic bags or buying 'disposable' plastic bottles of water

-reduce use of energy and consumption of consumer goods (buy and eat local products/food)

Conclude the conversation by inviting worshippers to celebrate God's gift of the web of connections by passing the peace of Christ.

The Peace

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

Other: And also with you.

(during the passing of the peace, invite people to go to assigned locations to pick up a sprig of the herb, rosemary – alternatively you can give out the rosemary with the bulletins at the beginning of the service)

Hymn: "God Who Touches Earth with Beauty" Voices United 310 verse 1
(stay seated and sing prayerfully)

A Prayer of Sorrow

(adapted from 'Only One Earth' a United Nations Environmental Sabbath Service)

During this time of prayer, invite the congregation to hold the sprig of rosemary in their hands. Rosemary is an herb of remembrance.

One: Creator God we have forgotten who we are.

We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos

We have become estranged from the movements of the earth

We have turned our backs on the cycles of life.

All: We have forgotten who we are.

One: God of the Cosmos, we have sought only our own security

We have exploited simply for our own ends

We have distorted our knowledge

We have abused our power.

All: We have forgotten who we are.

One: Now the land is barren

And the waters are poisoned

And the air is polluted.

All: We have forgotten who we are.

One: Now the forests are dying

And the creatures are disappearing

And the humans are despairing.

All: We have forgotten who we are.

One: Renewing and recreating God, we ask forgiveness

We ask for the gift of remembering

We ask for the strength to change.

Silence

(invite people to slightly crush the rosemary leaves in their hands to release the fragrance.)

One: O God, as we inhale the scent of the rosemary,
help us to remember...
We remember the healing powers you have given to Earth
the cleansing powers of the waters
the purifying powers of the sun and the trees
the many plants and oils that have soothed wounds and cured disease.

All: *We remember Earth's healing powers.*

One: O God, help us to remember...
We remember Jesus Christ, the wounded healer
who suffers our pains and the pains of Earth
who in his suffering, dying and rising sets free your life-giving power
for the healing and mending of all creation.

All: *We remember Christ, the wounded healer.*

One: O God, help us to remember...
We remember that you created our hands to mend and heal,
to nurture and tend to Earth and all Earth's creatures.

**All: *We remember that we are created for healing and nurturing life.
Amen.***

Sung Response: "Touch the Earth Lightly" Voices United 307

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 65:17-26

Gospel Reading: Selected Readings

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him, not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people...And the Word became flesh and lived among us...(John 1:1-4,14)

God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)

What is the Kingdom of God like? ... It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches. (Luke 13:18)

Jesus said to his disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation (Mark 16:15)

Message/Reflection/Homily: Loving Earth Back to Health

(see reflection document for further ideas and suggestions)

Hymn: 'The Earth and All Who Breathe' Voices United 295
or 'Soil of God, You and I' More Voices 174

Offering Invitation

We offer our lives and the work of our hands and hearts as we join in the repair and mending of God's good Earth.

Offertory 'Creator God You Gave Us Life' More Voices 27, verse 3
or 'Teach Me, God, To Wonder' Voices United 299, verse 1

Prayers of the People and Jesus' Prayer

One: The Spirit of God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Turn to God the source of life.

All: We lift our hearts in prayer.

One: Let us give thanks.

All: We offer joyful thanks to God.

(this prayer can be offered by one person or shared with a couple of voices)

God, we give thanks that you look at this world through the eyes of love.

When we see with eyes dimmed by life's struggles, you see the beauty at the heart of your creation, you see the spark of hope waiting to burst forth, you see the next step along the road to peace and reconciliation.

Thank you God for renewing our sight; for your light that dispels the shadows that cloud our vision; for your grace that clears our eyes to see what is at the heart of life.

We celebrate the rhythm and patterns you weave into creation:

-times for planting and nurturing growth, seasons of abundance, rich with colour and variety, cycles of birth and death among all your creatures, the flow of rivers, the ebb of the tide, and the sunlight giving way to the dark of night.

Thank you for those who invite us to live in harmony with these rhythms

-for first nations peoples who offer the wisdom of their aboriginal traditions

-for community and faith groups who give time and energy for the healing of the earth

-for educators, mentors, theologians, scientists, environmentalists, artists and poets who inform and inspire us and lead us into relationships where we honour, cherish and respect this earth we call home.

-and so in thanks we name these people and organizations:

(name particular people and organizations from your context)

Creator God, we thank you for this vast and wonderful country that we call home - a land of tundra, old growth forests, oceans, lakes and rivers, snow-capped mountains, grassy plains, parks, farms and untamed wilderness.

Thank you for those who are careful stewards tending to this land

-those who work in the national and provincial parks, fishers and farmers who harvest food with respect for the earth and its creatures, leaders in communities and organizations who try to minimize the environmental impact of industry, the building of towns and cities, and the transporting of peoples and goods.

God, hear our prayers for those places in the world, where your creatures and creation groan under the burden of pollution, abuse and neglect.

-we pray for cities covered in a cloud of smog, for water sources that once were life-giving and are now full of deadly toxins and bacteria

-we pray land that is stripped of vegetation, where the soil can no longer sustain growing things

-we pray for animals who have lost their homes and habitat, and are endangered or on the brink of extinction.

-we pray for peoples whose environment is not a place of safety, but rather one of threat – of drought or of flood, of earthquake or tsunami, of toxic water, air or soil

We grieve with those who are sick or dying because of a poisoned environment.

O God, we call on you to guide us in ways that will work to restore the world to your sacred purpose. When we feel paralyzed and helpless in the face of so much that defies your gift of life, open to us possibilities to support and work with others to plant new seeds of hope. God, draw us into partnerships that give us the energy and hope to work for your wholeness and healing.

Show us the power of each generous and selfless act and word of tender care.

Steady all those whose lives are held in the balance.

Bring relief and rest to those weary by life's burdens.

Bring inspiration and creativity to those who are ready to give up.

Bring the assurance of your presence to any who feel isolated and alone.

On this day we pray particularly for:

(name prayer concerns in your context)

We pray in Christ who dwells among us and we pray as he taught us...

Jesus' Prayer

Hymn: 'Called by Earth and Sky' More Voices 135
or 'For the Healing of the Nations' Voices United 678

Commissioning & Blessing

Go into God's Earth in awe and respect...

to see God's glory in rock and tree

to hear God voice in the cry of a loon and in the rush of the wind

to taste God's goodness in a cup of water and bread broken and shared

to feel God's presence in the soil beneath your feet.

And as you go, go with the blessing of God who creates in love,

Jesus Christ who roots us and connects us in love,

and the Holy Spirit who bears the fruit of love in us all. Amen

Sung Amen